

● DROUGHT

# The silent killer

**D**rought is probably the worst of all natural disasters. It is not spectacular like a volcano or a bushfire and it does not shock you like an earthquake. But as it gradually grips the land, it becomes the silent yet greatest killer. As the rains fail to come, as crops wither and animals die, people feel powerless and give up hope. Instead of there being a few hundred, or even thousands of people affected, millions can die when drought stalks the land.

## Africa: death of the land

Droughts are particularly bad in hot lands where more water is needed to

sustain life. The Sahel of Africa is one such place. It was the scene of the greatest human disaster experienced on the planet this century.

Beginning as far back as 1965 a series of minor droughts affected this huge area which

● THE SAHEL extends for 5000 kilometres across Africa along the southern border of the world's greatest desert, the Sahara. It covers an area of 6 million square kilometres and contains countries with the unfamiliar names of Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Ethiopia.



The loss of animals through drought can be disastrous